

WASHINGTON – Today, Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Ted Poe (R-TX) introduced H.R. 3658, the “Water for the World Act of 2012,” bipartisan legislation that strengthens U.S. foreign assistance in water and sanitation by leveraging innovation, strengthening partnerships, and improving transparency and accountability without making additional demands on the foreign assistance budget. The bill improves the effectiveness of our aid programs and moves us towards greater country-ownership of projects, while ensuring our investments provide long-term benefits. It allows us to provide more while using less in support of the world’s poorest people.

Nearly 900 million people around the world don’t have clean drinking water and 2.6 billion lack access to improved sanitation. The absence of these resources poses a significant challenge for development and security around the world, reinforcing a cycle of poverty and instability that represents both a humanitarian disaster and a national security threat.

“We can improve access to clean water by improving leadership and accountability,” **said Blumenauer**

. “We don’t have to spend millions searching for a cure, because something as simple as teaching the value of washing hands or providing access to basic technology we already have is all it takes to save millions of lives. Without asking for any increase in funding, the Water for the World Act puts in place a new set of priorities for our foreign assistance programs that will make them more effective at delivering the help that many so desperately need.”

“Water is key to just about every kind of development,” **said Poe**. “If we don’t get water right, it doesn’t matter how many schools we build or vaccines we pass out- we might as well throw our money down the drain. This bill is about using taxpayer dollars more effectively by making water a priority in any development discussion- like it should be.”

Children are most vulnerable to water-related diseases: 90% of all deaths caused by diarrheal diseases are among children under 5 years of age, mostly in developing countries. In all, 1.8 million children under the age of 5 die every year, more than from AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined. The economic impacts are devastating: in India alone, inadequate sanitation costs \$53.8 billion every year, or 6.4 percent of the country’s GDP.

This legislation drives our development assistance programs to provide a greater, more

effective role in providing access to clean water and sanitation. Building upon the success of the 2005 Water for the Poor Act, this bill enhances the capacity of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department to play a greater, more effective role in development assistance as well as mitigate cross-border conflict. The bill:

- Elevates the existing position of the Global Water Coordinator within USAID to integrate and implement water strategies, and deliver aid more effectively;
- Elevates the existing position of the Special Advisor for Water Resources within the State Department to coordinate the diplomatic policy of the U.S. with respect to global freshwater issues;
- Increases the sustainability of water, sanitation and hygiene projects to ensure that our investments continue to provide benefits over the long-term;
- Increases country-ownership of water, sanitation and hygiene projects to ensure that our foreign assistance dollars meet the needs of poor local communities, rather than officials in Washington; and
- Increases transparency of aid and creating monitoring and evaluation standards that focus on impact to ensure USAID and the State Department can identify and utilize best-practices.